



THE PRESIDENCY  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Released by The Presidency, 9 August 2012

*Address by His Excellency*

# President Jacob Zuma

*on the occasion of the celebration of*

## National Women's Day

*at Union Buildings, Tshwane*



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*Honourable Deputy President, Mr Kgalema Motlanthe,  
Premier Nomvula Mokonyane, Honourable Minister for Women, Children and  
People with Disabilities, the Minister of Arts and Culture and all Ministers, Premiers,  
Deputy Ministers and MECs,  
The Mayor of Tshwane, Councillor Ramokgopa and other Mayors,  
Heads of our legislatures and other state institutions,  
Leaders of political parties,  
Ambassadors and High Commissioners,  
Veterans of the 1956 Women's March and other senior citizens,  
Leaders and members of Women's Organisations here present,  
Fellow South Africans,*

**Sanibonani, dumelang, molweni, good morning,**

I would like to extend warm greetings to all South Africans, and especially to all women and girls on this important day in our history.

Ngibingelela bonke omame namantombazane eNingizimu Afrika ngalelilanga elibaluleke kangaka lokubonga iqhaza labo emzabalazweni, emakhaya nasempilweni jikelele ezweni lethu.

Uma uthuthukisa omame, uthuthukisa isizwe. Yingakho sigubha lomcimbi namhlanjena.

Sithi malibongwe igama lamakhosikazi!

Our theme for the 2012 National Women's Day is Women Unite in fighting poverty, inequality and unemployment.

The 2012 National Women's Day takes place during a significant year, the celebration of 100 years of selfless struggle. It was a struggle in which women played a pivotal role to bring about freedom and a society free of poverty, inequality and racism.

We pay tribute to many generations of women for their sacrifices, patriotism, hard work and commitment.

We salute Charlotte Maxeke, the founder of the Bantu Women's League a precursor to the ANC Women's League, a woman of substance who was a pioneer in many fields – science, education, missionary work, social work and leadership.

She led the first campaign against pass laws in Bloemfontein in the Free State, as early as 1913.

The Free State Provincial government this week honoured this heroine by renaming Maitland Street on which she led the march, as Charlotte Maxeke Street.

We honour the women who followed in her footsteps, the 20 000 women who marched to the Union Buildings against pass laws on the 9th of August 1956.

Among this group were Lillian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph, Sophie Williams-De Bruyn and Albertina Sisulu.

Lillian Ngoyi eloquently described the pass laws as “a badge of slavery in terms whereof all sorts of insults and humiliation may be committed on Africans by members of the ruling class”.

## **Compatriots,**

We would like to single out for special mention, women in rural areas for their sterling contribution to the struggle. Amongst many activities, we celebrate the historic uprising against pass laws in Zeerust.

The women's revolt began in 1957 in Lehurutse and spread to other villages in Zeerust, such as Dinokana, Lekgopung, Motswedi and Gopane.

Mobile trucks were being sent by the racist government to bring "dompasses" to women. Women defied even their traditional leaders who were instructing them to cooperate and take the dompasses.

In honour of the heroism of these women compatriots, the sites of the anti-pass marches in Zeerust will be declared as heritage sites.

In urban areas around the same time during the 50s, we salute the women who campaigned against the prohibition of brewing traditional beverages at home. Brewing had been outlawed so that men could be lured into government beer halls to spend their meagre wages. Women boycotted and picketed the beer halls, forcing many to close.

Two of the leading figures of the Cato Manor anti-beer hall campaign of 1959 were Mary Thiye and Dorothy Nyembe.

Malibongwe igama lamakhosikazi!

We will always remember and celebrate the role of organisations such as the Black Sash movement which bravely promoted human rights and justice, in the face of repression during the struggle against apartheid.

We salute all women for their resilience against pass laws, severe repression, the internecine violence that engulfed our townships during the 80s and 90s, arrests, torture and all sorts of violations of human dignity.

We honour the women who joined Umkhonto Wesizwe, taking up arms in defence of their country and in the quest for freedom.

A Women's Monument will be built on Lillian Ngoyi square here in Tshwane, profiling the critical role played by women in the realization of our democracy.

The driving force behind the actions of all these generations of women was to build a National Democratic Society – a nonracial, non-sexist, democratic and prosperous South Africa, free of poverty, inequality and unemployment.

Today we look back at what we have achieved since the attainment of the freedom they fought so hard for, especially with regards to promoting gender equality.

It is a matter of considerable pride that many of the rights and freedoms women fought for are now entrenched in the Constitution of our country.

Gender equality is now a constitutional imperative in our country. This is further reinforced by various pieces of legal instruments, including the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act, the Employment Equity Act, the Domestic Violence Act, Maintenance Act, Sexual Offences Act and the Civil Union Act.

Internationally, we are parties to various instruments, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Beijing Platform for Action, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, as well as the AU Gender Policy, among others.

In this vein, we celebrate far and wide, the recent election of the first woman chairperson of the African Union Commission, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma. Under her leadership, we are confident that the status of women and children in the continent will be further entrenched.

Other key structures promoting gender equality are the Commission for Gender Equality and the Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities.

While we still have a lot of work to do, we are satisfied with the progress made thus far in improving the status and quality of life of women, in only 18 years of freedom.

We are making progress on women's occupation of leadership positions. The ANC government remains determined to ultimately meet the 50-50 target on women's representation.

In the national executive, we have 14 Cabinet Ministers and 15 deputy ministers. In addition, five out of nine premiers are women, which mean the majority of provinces are run by women.

The representation of women in Parliament increased from 27.8% in 1994 to 44.0% in 2009.

Similarly, the representation of women in Provincial Legislatures has increased from 25.4% to 42.4% respectively.

However, the 2011 Business Women in Leadership census conducted by the Business Women's Association of South Africa shows that gender balance remains slow in the corporate boardrooms.

The census reveals that although there is a slight increase in the employment of women in top executive positions, this increase is minimal.

What is more disturbing is that there are still companies that have a zero percentage of women representation as directors and executive managers.

The 2011 report of the Commission for Employment Equity indicates that more must also be done to improve the representation of people with disabilities at top and senior management levels in both the private and public sectors.

The representation of women at the senior and top management levels of the public service also remains inadequate.

Experience has shown that voluntary mechanisms of gender equality are inadequate.

For this reason, we have directed to Ministry for Women, Children and People with Disabilities to fast track the Gender Equality Bill, so that we can enforce gender parity measures across all sectors of society.

We are also amending the Employment Equity Act, in order to introduce new measures such as the principle of equal pay for work of equal value. It will impose sanctions on employers that fail to prepare and implement an employment equity plan.

### **Compatriots and friends,**

Enhancing gender equality in the private and public should not be viewed simply as a compliance issue to pacify the Employment Equity Commission.

It is a fundamental principle of democracy and human rights. Women's rights are human rights.

Compatriots, given the legacy of colonialism of a special type and apartheid, we have a lot of work to do to improve the living conditions of millions of our people, especially women.

We know that it will take years if not decades to completely eradicate poverty, inequality and unemployment, but we will soldier on to achieve this goal of the founding mothers and fathers of our struggle for freedom.

We will soldier on because we can see results.

We are happy to have achieved the Millennium Development Goal target of reducing the number of people living on less than one US dollar a day.

Most of the achievements in reducing extreme levels of income poverty can be ascribed to government's comprehensive social protection programme. This includes extensive income support programmes, access to free education and primary health care for the poorest and the provision of free basic services to indigent members of our society.

Kuningi osekwenziwe ukuze sinciphise isibalo sabantu abahlupheka kakhulu abangenakho ngisho ukudla ngosuku nosuku. Uhulumeni usiza ukuxosha ikati eziko, ngokuletha izibonelelo zezingane, ezifana ne - child support grant, izimpesheni zabadala nezimali zokondla izintandane kanye nokusiza abakhubazekile.

Lolusizo lukahulumeni lwenza umehluko emindenini eminingi, ngenxa yesimo sokwentuleka kwemisebenzi.

With regards to expanding basic services, the electrification programme has been a great success. In 1994, only 30% of South African households had access to electricity.

To date, Eskom has connected over four million households to the national electricity grid since 1994. In rural areas, electrification has increased from 12% in 1994 to almost 60% currently. In addition, close to 450 000 people were supplied with basic water supply between April and December 2011.

We are also making real progress on improving women's access to health care services.

We have aggressively implemented new policies to increase universal access to free antiretroviral treatment to ensure that HIV positive people live full productive lives.

Treatment is made available to HIV positive pregnant women, babies born to mothers who are HIV positive as well as everyone with a CD4 count of less or equal to 350.

Our objective is to increase access to anti-retroviral drugs to 2, 5 million South Africans by 2014.

### **Compatriots,**

We are also celebrating the fact that the transmission of HIV from mother to child has dropped from 8% in 2008 to 2.7 per cent in 2011. We congratulate and thank all women and health professionals for making this programme such a phenomenal success.

We are also delighted with the results of the third South African National HIV Communication Survey on HIV Counseling and Testing.

The survey shows that the percentage of people ever tested for HIV increased from 55% in 2009 to 64% in 2012, for a total of 17.4 million people.

Our priority health programmes also include increasing life expectancy, and in particular the reduction and ultimate eradication of mother and child mortality.

South Africa has adopted the African Union's Campaign to Accelerate the Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa and we are determined to achieve good results to protect the lives of women and children.

With regards to safety and security, since 1994, our Government has been working tirelessly to eradicate violence against women and children.

The enactment of the Domestic Violence Act was an important milestone. We urge women to use this law to protect themselves.

We urge communities to help government to eradicate violence against women through reporting such crimes. Domestic violence in particular should not be treated as a private matter. It is a crime and must be reported to the police.

As a nation we must unite against all hooligans who attack and sexually assault women and girls.



The recent reported rape of a woman aged 94 years of age, who is the same age as our own Madiba, depicts a sickness in our society that must be nipped in the bud. Women must be free to walk anywhere, day or night, without fearing attacks. The police stand ready to deal with such criminals.

We will continue supporting programmes such as the Thuthuzela Care Centres to reduce secondary victimisation and to improve conviction rates.

Women have raised the need to conscientise and train officials in the coalface of helping women access justice.

In this regard, we have trained 180 prosecutors on the comprehensive manual on child maintenance matters to improve access to maintenance payments to support children.

In addition, a total of 349 prosecutors have been trained to implement the new Child Justice Act, and 102 were trained on the domestic violence law, and 79 to manage on human trafficking cases.

Government has also set up a task team to investigate the revival of sexual offences courts, which recorded impressive conviction rates in certain parts of the country in the past.

There are other measures that will yield positive results. Key amongst these is the re-introduction of the family violence, child protection and sexual offences units within the police service.

Another positive development is the approval of the Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in Persons Bill, which will yield concrete results against such crimes.

Most importantly, communities and all of us must support families and women who are victims of domestic violence. We must also support families of missing women.

We had such a sad case with the late Constable Francis Rasuge of Pretoria who went missing for years until her remains were found.

During this Women's Day, I wish to also highlight the case of Miss Nandi Mbizane, who lived in Centurion in Pretoria who disappeared on the 4th of March 2012.

Law enforcement agencies are doing their best to solve the case.

We are aware that there are a number of similar cases that we may not know about. Our thoughts are with all affected families.

**Compatriots,**

Government working alone will not be able to eradicate violence against women and children or women and child abuse.

We are therefore pleased to work with projects such as Brothers for Life, as well as established civil society organisations such as Soul City and the Sonke Gender Justice.

These organisations remind us that men have an important role to play in combating violence against women and children. We congratulate them for promoting the participation of men so positively.

Our ultimate goal is to build a society where women can be free from violence and from conditions that hold them back from achieving their full potential.

**Compatriots,**

Let me emphasise that in all we are doing as government, we are building a society in which we must work together to solve problems.

We are building a society where we do not just ask what government can do, and or complain about what government has not done yet. We must build a society in which we all pull together to tackle challenges.

**Fellow South Africans,**

South Africa is on track to meet the Millennium Development Goal of promoting universal access to education. The number of girls attending primary, secondary and tertiary education has improved significantly.

This is important because education is central to development and can serve as a catalyst to address gender disparities.

Moreover, education is the primary vehicle by which vulnerable children can lift themselves out of poverty, as President Nelson Mandela once told us.

There are some serious difficulties in education delivery in provinces such as Limpopo and the Eastern Cape. The national government has intervened to assist in restoring quality learning and teaching.

We will do our best, working with communities, to reverse current difficulties and deliver quality education in these provinces.

Still on education, we are encouraged by the steady increase in female enrolment and graduation in higher education, especially in the field of science, engineering and technology.

The number of black female graduates with doctoral degrees in Science and Technology increased from 38, 8% in 2002 to 44, 7 % in 2008.

This is a good trend, as we want women to venture into these new fields, beyond what is considered traditionally female fields.

### **Compatriots,**

We cannot complete the emancipation of women, without promoting economic emancipation.

We encourage women to play a meaningful and direct role in key industrial sectors as articulated in the Industrial Policy Action Plan.

The sectors include chemicals, advanced manufacturing, green energy, agro processing, metals, and the automotive sectors.

We also have a number of programmes as vehicles of supporting women-led and women-owned enterprises, run by the Department of Trade and Industry amongst others.

These include the Isivande Women's Fund which provides finance, targeting registered enterprises which are at least 60 percent women owned.

The Bavumile Skills Development Initiative identifies talent in the arts, crafts, textiles and clothing sectors among women enterprises.

Its main objective is to improve the quality of products produced by women enterprises and cooperatives to ensure their market readiness.

The Technology for Women in Business programme rewards with annual awards, women enterprises that use technology to grow their businesses. We congratulate the 2011 winner, Dr Moretlo Molefi, who pioneered a product in telemedicine.

Government also runs the Techno Girl Programme which encourages girls to choose careers in engineering, science and technology. A total of 100 girls per province participate.

We also have programmes promoting women in farming and women in construction. The ultimate goal is to enable women to contribute to economic growth, job creation and the fight against poverty and inequality.

### **Compatriots,**

The country has to promote women's emancipation in a comprehensive manner, and should also include sports and recreation.

Firstly, let me congratulate all South African athletes competing in the Olympics Games currently underway in London.

Let me congratulate and welcome back home, the South African Olympics swimming team that arrived back this morning.

Together with the conquering rowing team, they have presented South Africa as a winning and shining nation on the world stage.

This year, our qualification standards for the Olympics were set a bar higher than the previous years to ensure that the team brings back home more medals than was the case in Beijing in 2008.

We are truly proud of the achievements, but we need more medals. The instruction was that they should come home with 12 medals.

Therefore, we wait in anticipation and know that they will continue doing their very best for this beautiful country.

Compatriots, we have seen developments during the Olympics that we can improve on especially regarding women in sport.

We have seen earlier on, in the qualifier championships that our women's teams led the pack with Banyana Banyana and the national Women's Hockey team, the Smoothies, qualifying for the Olympics.

This happened despite the skewed resourcing of these women's teams, in comparison to their male counter parts.

We know how best these teams can do with more support from all of us and we must all play our part, government and the private sector, to build a winning sporting nation.

We have also decided to formalize and professionalise netball, which is the most popular women's sport in South Africa.

Working in cooperation with Netball SA, government will now host an annual four nation netball tournament, called the Netball Diamond Challenge.

Participating countries will be South Africa, Botswana, Tanzania and Malawi. The tournament will begin this Saturday, on the 11th of August, and will run until the 18th of this month, in Johannesburg and Cape Town.

To further increase the pool of netball players to be available for selection to the Protea team, we will launch a full professional netball league from April 2013.

If we succeed in these programmes as we intend to, we will not only improve the sport and our competitiveness. We will also empower many more young and active women socially and economically, and create more positive role models for our children.

The Department of Sport and Recreation will host a National Women and Sport Indaba later in the year to discuss how to develop women in sport further, building on these lessons and current programmes.

### **Compatriots,**

It has been a long road since Charlotte Maxeke's first anti-pass march in 1913, followed by many women's campaigns until 1994.

We have made substantial progress. We know too, that there is a lot more that we must do working together as government and the people of South Africa.

As our late stalwart Mme Helen Joseph outlined years back, progress has indeed been made.

She said:

"I ... don't doubt for a moment that the revolution will result in a nonracial society.

"I have just come from being a patient in Groote Schuur Hospital where they now have integrated wards. For the first time in my life, I have seen it working.

"The patients were mixed, the staff was mixed, and the medical officers were mixed; it was totally integrated. It was beautiful. White and black together. And it works. To me that is terribly exciting".

In addition, we know that all of it will work because of the participation of women. We were told thus by our late stalwart and mother, Albertina Sisulu. She said in 1987;

"Women are the people who are going to relieve us from all this oppression and depression. The rent boycott that is happening in Soweto now is alive because of the women.

It is the women who are on the street committees educating the people to stand up and protect each other".

Siyalibonga igalelo lomama emzabalazweni wenkululeko.

We praise the name of South African women from all walks of life.

Njengesizwe sonkana sihlangene, sithi, Malibongwe igama lamakhosikazi!

**I thank you.**

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**Course: No Woman, No Revolution**

**14103b, President Zuma, Speech on National Women's Day, 2012**

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